



The Virginia Saltwater Review

Plans and Statistics Department
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<http://www.mrc.virginia.gov>

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by

Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division

OVERVIEW

Welcome to the first Virginia Saltwater Review of 2009! We have so much to catch up on, including new programs, regulations reminders, and of course, great Virginia fishing!



Photo courtesy of Captain Bob's
Marina (Chincoteague, VA)

Offshore fishing has seen some pretty hot action with bluefin tuna, with large fish being caught around Norfolk Canyon. Inshore, it's flounder, flounder, flounder! This February, the Commission voted to keep the recreational flounder season open year-round (no closed season) with a 19-inch size limit, 5 fish per person. While the current action is spotty, seaside Eastern Shore locations seem to be producing the larger fish. Paul Hines of Cambridge, MD caught a 7-pound, 2-ounce citation (see photo at left). But, there is more than just flounder in our waters. The islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel have produced numerous tautog and black sea bass. REMEMBER, the tautog fishery is closed from May 1 through June 24.

Another year of data collection is upon us, and the Marine Sportfish Collection Project is already in full swing with numerous tautog carcasses being donated by local anglers. See page 7 for more details for which species the project is targeting this year. Due to funding, the project had to be consolidated, and currently, only the three original project donation sites are in operation, Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton), Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville), and Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach), however, we do plan on having a donation site located at the soon-to-open Buckroe Fishing Pier (Hampton), so stay tuned for the grand opening story.

Also, VMRC's Biological Sampling Team will once again be back to work up the catches at two of the area's premier fishing tournaments, the 3rd Annual Black Drum World Championship in Cape Charles May 15-17 (go to www.esvachamber.org for more information) and the Hampton Creek Cobia Tournament in downtown Hampton this upcoming June! Please come out, fish the tournaments, and stop by and mention the Virginia Saltwater Review to the team.



VMRC introduces the Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program!

Launched in February, 2009, in conjunction with the Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the VMRC has placed collection bins for monofilament fishing line across the state. Please help keep our waterways cleaner and safer for fish, birds, marine mammals, and boaters by depositing any used or tangled monofilament fishing line into specially marked containers (see photo). Several of our Saltwater Review partners have



placed bins at their locations including Captain Bob's Marina, Chris' Bait and Tackle, the Ocean View Fishing Pier, and Jett's Hardware. If you have any questions about the program, or suggestions for new bin locations, please contact Alicia Nelson at (757) 247-2244 or alicia.nelson@mrc.virginia.gov.

VMRC is still requesting length data from red drum that anglers catch-and-release. You can provide length and location information through the Virginia Saltwater Fisherman's Journal (www.vasaltwaterjournal.com). See page 8 for general details about the website.



The Virginia Recreational Fishing Advisory Board (RFAB) will meet to review projects which are currently under consideration for funding from the Virginia Saltwater Recreational Fishing Development Fund (saltwater recreational fishing license funds). The first meeting, introducing the proposals, will be held on Monday, May 11, 2009, 7:00 p.m., at the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, 2600 Washington Avenue, Fourth Floor, Newport News. See pages 9 and 10 for more details.

Please note: the Virginia Saltwater Review is only available online. Please feel free to print and distribute to your club or organization as needed.

THE FISHING REPORT

Chincoteague

Flounder action is hot at Captain Bob's Marina. The Flats and Queen Sound has been incredibly productive for the early season, and many legal sized fish have come from working 3 to 12 feet of water with minnows, squid, Gulp Alive, smelt, finger mullet, or silversides. While loads of legal-sized fish have come in over the past few weeks, the most impressive is the 7-pound, 2-ounce flounder brought in last Friday.

Wachapreague

At the Wachapreague Marina, anglers were vying for the top spots in the ongoing flounder tournament. Most found plenty of flounder, but few keepers. The average was 10 undersized flounder for every 19-inch fish. So far the top tournament fish is 6 pounds 3 ounces with several runners up in the 5-6 pound range. The catch is averaging 1 keeper in 10 fish. The tournament continues until Sunday.

According to staff at Captain Zeds, anglers are catching a lot of flounder in the Bulls Head area, drifting from day marker 134 to day marker 138. The Drawing and Green channels are also productive during the outgoing tide. The mouth of Seal Creek and the Hummock area have been hot spots on both the incoming and outgoing tide.

Cape Charles

Small black drum have been found off of the barrier island surf, according to staff at Chris' Bait and Tackle. Decent catches of flounder have been reported near Oyster (at South Bay and Ship Shoal Channel). There has been very little action off of the local piers, with no croaker or spot catches yet. There are reports of nice tautog near the high-rise of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

Onancock

Captain Wil reports catch-and-release striped bass fishing in Onancock. There is very little bait, so things are slow. He expects the bait (and the nice fish) to show up at the end of April or the beginning of May.

Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel

Twin 9-pound, 2-ounce tautog were brought in at Cobb's Marina on the 17th of April. Both of these fish were caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel using crab. Staff at the marina has also weighed a few flounder, with the largest over 5 pounds. Anglers are doing well catching keepers, but no flounder citations have arrived yet.

Staff at Sunset Boating Center report grouper catches at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and the James River Bridge. Flounder have been reported from the Hampton Bar as well.

Fishing has been relatively slow at Salt Ponds Marina, despite a report of an 88-pound swordfish caught last week.

On the York River, fishing has begun! According to staff at the York River Fishing Center, a few croaker and speckled trout have been found in Mobjack Bay. No flounder has been reported in this area yet, but they are expected to arrive soon.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following: Tautog action is red hot, but keep in mind that tautog fishing is closed as of May 1st. Anglers are taking good advantage of the last days of the season with great catches being made in both the bay and along the coastal wrecks. The Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and the Triangle Wrecks have been hot spots. More keeper-sized

black sea bass are moving into the coastal wrecks. They are not in thick yet, but some nice sea bass have been caught at the Triangle Wrecks, Powell, Ricks, and Hanks. Flounder have been receiving a lot of attention with mixed results. Spiny dogfish have been a problem, but they should be leaving the bay soon. Some nice flounder catches have been made at the 3rd island area of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, Buoy 36A, the Hump, and at the mouth of Back River. Croaker are biting up in the rivers. With the extended spell of warm weather coming over the next week, the water temperatures will shoot up, and we should be hearing of some speckled trout action starting in the Mobjack Bay area. Some speckled trout are being caught in the Elizabeth River. The drum season will be starting soon. Boats will start looking for them over the next week. The few boats which have run offshore bottom fishing have found mostly spiny dogfish. That will improve soon. The pelagic fishery has consisted of a few bluefin tuna caught when warmer water briefly pushed in. It has been better out of the Outer Banks with some dolphin, wahoo, and yellowfin tuna being caught. The yellowfin bite has not been consistent. Some bluefin tuna are being caught out of Oregon Inlet. A few blue marlin have been caught out of Hatteras.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following: Although the spring fishery is on the upswing, the flounder action has been spotty lately. Flatfish are available most anywhere in the lower bay, but the best locations are still the Hump, and the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Anglers are also hooking flatties up to 6.5 pounds inside Lynnhaven River and Oyster, with the outgoing tide producing the best results.

Although the flounder bite was off this week, the tautog scene made up for it. The tog bite within bay waters is on fire. Excellent catches are coming from the structure and pilings of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and lower bay wrecks. Anglers using fiddlers and crabs are experiencing steady action with fish ranging from 4 to 6 pounds. Several trophy catches to 17 pounds are also coming from these same areas. Ronald Larkin and David Thompson, both of Portsmouth, had a great tog day at the 2nd island this week. David weighed in a nice 15-pound, 12-ounce brute, while Ronald rounded out their day with the top hook weighing in at a whopping 17 pounds. Big fish are available on most inshore and offshore wrecks, where several nice fish were pulled from the Triangle Wrecks and the Brass Spike lately. This is the last weekend to target these fish for awhile since they become off limits on the 1st of May.

Croaker are showing in various areas in the bay, especially near Willoughby, Ocean View, and off the Little Creek jetties. The folks at the Ocean View Fishing Pier report good catches of croaker in the evenings, with anglers filling up buckets with fish up to a pound. The biggest hardheads are still coming from the lower bay rivers. Roundhead and flounder catches are adding some variety from the pier, where anglers are enticing round head weighing to around a pound with blood worms.

Rudee and Lynnhaven inlets are still harboring very good numbers of healthy puppy drum measuring around 25 inches mixed with taylor bluefish. The best pup catches are coming on crab lately. Speckled trout are also hitting inside Rudee Inlet, with fish pushing to 5 pounds hitting well on Mirrolure and grubs.

Reports of some recreational and commercial black drum catches are coming from the seaside inlets near Quinby, but locally only smallish blacks are coming from the surf, with reports of some commercial catches coming from the lower Eastern Shore area. The folks at Chris' Bait and Tackle predict the fish will show in numbers by early May, which is when they anticipate stocking sea clams.

When we close in on the full moon, which is not until the 1st week of May this year, we will begin to hear of red drum catches from the shoals off the Eastern Shore. Look for the kayakers to make the first reports since they can access these treacherous areas more easily than larger boats.

Visions of blueline tilefish continue to lure boats over the 50-Fathom Curve to check out the scene first-hand. Nice black sea bass are available on deepwater wrecks, where limits of big fish are the norm right now. Black sea bass are also starting to mingle closer to shore where fish to over 5 pounds are coming from structures within reach of shore.

Offshore action out of Carolina is very good right now. This is the time of the year for the big gaffer dolphin. Boats are also finding yellowfin and bluefin tuna, along with a few big wahoo. With a beautiful forecast on hand for this weekend, Virginia boats will make the run to check out the warmer water within reach.

Virginia Middle Bay

Roger, of Jett's Hardware, and Dan, of Smith Point Marina, report that striper fishing in Maryland has been going strong. There were several reports of fish in the 20- to 30-pound class being caught. With the Virginia trophy season only a few days away, the prospects are looking good. Croaker are also making a good showing in the shallow waters of the creeks of the Wicomico River. Lewis, with Garrett's Marina, reported that a 3-pound croaker was just landed in their neck of the woods.

Virginia Beach

In Rudee inlet, anglers are finding taylor bluefish, speckled trout, and puppy drum, according to staff at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center. Headboats have found numerous black sea bass and tautog at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, and numerous flounder (with some keepers) were caught in the bay. Offshore, near the Norfolk Canyon, anglers have found tons of bluefin tuna over 100 pounds and 65 inches.

From Fisherman's Wharf Marina, anglers have reported offshore catches of bluefin tuna to the south. Black sea bass are also being caught offshore. Inshore, good tautog fishing has been reported near Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

Virginia Piers

Croaker have arrived at the Ocean View Fishing Pier. Other catches include sea mullet and small flounder.

At the Virginia Beach Fishing Pier, fishing has been slow with small spot, croaker, and sea mullet.

A few bluefish were caught at the Sandbridge Pier last week, but everything else has been very slow as of yet.

Outer Banks, NC

Offshore fishing has been warming up with the weather in the Nags Head area. Anglers trying the waters have been rewarded with yellowfin tuna, dolphin, wahoo, king mackerel, bluefish, and albacore. Those working closer to shore were finding tilefish and black sea bass. Pier fishing has been slow with some spot and puffers

being the main catches. Inshore, some red drum have been around, but they are few and far between.

People fishing south of Oregon Inlet around ramps 43 and 44 have been having luck with the puffers and sea mullet. The jetties have been seeing even better action with sea mullet, spot, flounder, and croaker. Fishermen are also expecting red drum at the point any time now.

Offshore fishing off Cape Hatteras has been producing yellowfin tuna, wahoo, dolphin, and scattered bill fish. Inshore, fishing continues to be slow with few reports of landings.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at 757.247.2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.









ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!

THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION

***WANTS YOUR FISH....
TO MEASURE AND AGE.***

*You catch it, you fillet it,
but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,
please donate them to science.*

The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

COBIA	SHEEPSHEAD	RED DRUM	BLACK DRUM
			
TAUTOG	KING MACKEREL	SPANISH MACKEREL	BLUEFISH (GREATER THAN 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)
			

**In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a
ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT, FOR EACH PARTICIPANT,
PER MONTH of the DONATION.**

Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:

**Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)
Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)
Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)
*Coming soon to the nearly completed
Buckroe Fishing Pier (Hampton)***

As of 01/15/2009



ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!

Get Hooked! Report at www.vasaltwaterjournal.com

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.



The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

You will be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released.

On those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the number caught and a range of lengths. Reporting individual measurements on more highly prized species -- such as Red Drum, Striped Bass and Flounder -- provides a greater benefit for everyone.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal," and is found at www.vasaltwaterjournal.com.

A screenshot of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's "Recreational Fishing Online Reporting" website. The page has a blue header with the commission's name and logo. Below the header, there's a section titled "Recreational Saltwater Fishing" with a "Welcome Jgrist," message. A "Virginia Recreational Assessment Program" logo is also present. A box on the left shows statistics for June 16, 2008: Members: 1,457, Trips: 295, Catches: 3,941. A central box titled "Red Drum Reports are Needed!" contains text about collecting length data for a stock assessment. Another box titled "New 2008 Tautog Regs" lists fishing regulations: Closed Season (May 1 through June 24), Minimum Size Limit (14 inches), and Possession Limit (4 per person). At the bottom, there are "Related Links" and "Help" sections.

ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!

MEETING NOTICE

Virginia Recreational Fishing Advisory Board

Virginia Marine Resources Commission

Monday, May 11, 2009

7:00 p.m.

The Virginia Recreational Fishing Advisory Board (RFAB) will meet to review the projects, listed below, which are currently under consideration for funding from the Virginia Saltwater Recreational Fishing Development Fund (saltwater recreational fishing license funds). The meetings, on these proposals, will be held on Monday, May 11, 2009, 7:00 p.m., at the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, 2600 Washington Avenue, Fourth Floor, Newport News.

Written comments, on the proposals, should be mailed to: Sonya Davis, VMRC Fisheries Management Division, 2600 Washington Avenue, 3rd Floor, Newport News, VA 23607 or E-mailed to: sonya.davis@mrc.virginia.gov.

Complete project proposals and additional information are available on the Internet at <http://www.mrc.virginia.gov/vsrfd/index.shtm>.

Tentative Agenda

I. Introduction, Announcements, Comments.

II. Status of Fund.

III. Review of Minutes from the November 2008 RFAB Meeting.

IV. Multi-Year Projects for 2009 Renewal.

- A) 2009 Sunshine Children's Fishing Program. Denny Dobbins, Portsmouth Anglers Club. \$7,194.
- B) 2009 Saxis Fishing Pier Youth Fishing Tournaments (Year 8). Allen Evans, Eastern Shore of Virginia Anglers Club. \$1,325.
- C) 2009 Hope House & Oak Grove Nursing Home Fishing Excursions and Clinics. D. Hurst, C. Macin, Great Bridge Fisherman's Association. \$4,000.
- D) 2009 Youth Developmental "Hooked on Fishing" Adventure (Year 2). A. Fisher, R. Lockhart, Virginia Charter Boat Association. \$5,780.
- E) 2009 Virginia Marine Sportfish Collection (Year 3). J. Grist, J. Cimino, VMRC. \$10,000.
- F) 2009 Deployment of Artificial Reef Structure. Mike Meier, VMRC. \$100,000.
- G) 2009 Estimate and Assess Social and Economic Importance and Value of Menhaden to Chesapeake Bay Stakeholders and Region (3 Year Study) - Year 3. James Kirkley, VIMS. \$154,452.
- H) 2009 Enhancing Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) Habitat: Research and Education for Restoration (Year 15). Robert Orth, VIMS. \$98,309.

ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!

- I) Federal Assistance (Wallop-Breaux) Matching Funds, Federal FY 2010. Jack Travelstead, VMRC. \$235,563.
- J) Jun - Dec 2009, Estimating Relative Abundance of Young-of-Year American Eel in the Virginia Tributaries of Chesapeake Bay. M. Fabrizio, T. Tuckey, VIMS. \$24,544.

V. Multi-Year Projects for 2010 Renewal.

- K) 2010 Children's Fishing Clinic (Year 13). Rob Cowling, Newport News Rotary Club and Coastal Conservation Association-Peninsula. \$6,500.
- L) 2010 Kiwanis Club Children's Fishing Clinic (Year 9). Wesley Brown, Capital District Kiwanis Club. \$6,500.
- M) 2010 Virginia Game Fish Tagging (Year 16). J. Lucy, VIMS and L. Gillingham, VMRC. \$87,800.
- N) 2010 Improving Stock Assessment of Weakfish - Year 3. Y. Jiao, D. Orth, VPI & SU, and R. O'Reilly, VMRC. \$111,356.
- O) Jan-Dec 2010, Estimating Relative Abundance of Young-of-Year American Eel in the Virginia Tributaries of Chesapeake Bay (Yr 9). M. Fabrizio, T. Tuckey, VIMS. \$46,574.

VI. New Projects for 2009.

- P) 2009 Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program. A. Nelson, J. Grist, VMRC. \$3,500.
- Q) 2009 Trophic Position and Ecological Function of Juvenile Menhaden in Chesapeake Bay. C. Jones, J. Schaffler, ODURF. \$43,967.

VII. New Projects for 2010.

- R) 2010 Academic Anglers Children's Fishing Clinic. C. Roberts, A. Bracey, Academic Anglers Fishing Team. \$1,000.
- S) 2010 Understanding the Impacts of Mycobacterial Disease on Striped Bass: When and Where does Mortality Occur in the Rappahannock River. J. Hoenig, W. Vogelbein, VIMS. \$50,535.
- T) 2010 Connecting Productivity in Eelgrass Beds to Recreationally Important Finfishes in Chesapeake Bay: Forage Fishes as Trophic Conduits. R. Latour, K. Sobocinski, J. van Montfrans, J. E. Duffy, VIMS. \$58,329.
- U) 2010 Blueline and Golden Tilefish Population Dynamics Along the Virginian Continental Shelf, Year 1. J. Ballenger, C. Jones, ODURF. \$72,768.

VIII. Tentative Dates for Future 2009 RFAB Meetings.

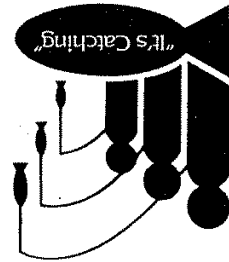
Public Hearing (7 p.m.) July 13

Work Session (5:30 p.m.) & Final Recommendations (7 p.m.) September 14

**VMRC DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE AGAINST INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES;
THEREFORE, IF YOU ARE IN NEED OF REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS DUE TO A
DISABILITY, PLEASE ADVISE SONYA DAVIS 757-247-8155, NO LESS THAN 5 WORK
DAYS PRIOR TO THE MEETING TIME AND IDENTIFY YOUR NEEDS.**

FIRST CLASS MAIL

TAKE A FRIEND FISHING



FISHERIES PLANS/STATISTICS OFFICE
VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION
2600 WASHINGTON AVE., 3RD FLOOR
NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA 23607

Practice

CAREFUL CATCH

REDUCE STRESS FACTORS THAT KILL FISH

Exhaustion * Loss of Slime * Wounds * Time out of Water